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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the Organization for Defending Victims of Violence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[13 February 2014]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Necessity for further attention of international mechanisms towards rights of Shia Minorities

Attention towards the rights of minorities as a component of human rights, has always been one of the principles of the activities of international organizations and institutions. In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the right to religion and belief is a fundamental right, and freedom of religion is the right to be equal to the majority of a population. The right to have a healthy environment, the right to educate based on the minority beliefs are the rights that must be considered for all minorities.

This is while Shia minorities in many countries are not only deprived of their rights, but also they are faced with numerous problems and abuses.

The existence of minorities with different cultural and civilization tendencies, prepares the basis for cultural and social diversity of any country, and are deemed as an inalienable part of societies.

In this regard human rights teachings strongly stress on the observation of the economic, social, cultural and political rights of these people. All this is while minorities, especially religious minorities in different countries are subjected to abuse and violation of their human rights in various forms. For example:

Various discriminations over time in Saudi Arabia is indicative of the fact that the Shia minority have continuously been under pressure and cannot enjoy their fundamental rights alongside ordinary citizens, and gain access to political, economic and social positions. The Shia minorities in Saudi Arabia are extremely deprived of their rights, that is they suffer from discrimination in both the law of the land and in practice. They are practically barred from publicly holding their religious customs and rituals, even as a small minority they cannot in any way demand political participation in the country, and enjoy their basic rights as normal citizens.

In Bahrain, the Shia are demographically in minority, but politically they are deemed a minority and any form of peaceful objection towards the existing discrimination is met by government crackdown. Politically the Shia are marginalized, socially they are deprived of their rights and continually treated as second class citizens. The Bahrain government prevents the Shia minority from any political activities and the fulfillment of their roles, and over the years whenever the Shia have tried to remove the existing discrimination through peaceful and legitimate moves, they are strongly cracked down.

In Pakistan, at least 320 Shia have been killed through targeted attacks in 2013 and this trends continues unabated. The Shia minority is targeted by acts of violence and by terror groups, and there are no mechanisms to protect them.

In Malaysia the authorities officially violate the basic and fundamental rights of the Shia minorities. They are prevented from freely holding their religious rituals and customs, in such an extent that 200 members of the Shia community were arrested while holding their religious rituals and unfairly tried and sentenced.

The aforementioned instances alongside many other cases show the increasing violence committed against the Shia minorities around the world, which requires the special attention of international institutions and mechanisms.

Although international mechanisms for the implementation of principles of minorities rights to-date have seen a lot of changes and improvements, but the connection between minority related issues are the instances that if attention is paid to them, a better future can be guaranteed for protection of minorities rights at the international level. Welcoming the activities and reports of the Special Rapporetur on Minorities, this NGO is concerned with the extent and interconnection of minorities issues and calls for other Human Rights Council mandate holders such as the Special Rapporteur on freedom of expression, peaceful assemblies, freedom of religion and belief, to seriously pursue the rights of Shia minorities around the world.